The Battle of Wheeler Wood by brodie-wan

Category: Stranger Things, 2016
Genre: Adventure, Drama
Language: English
Status: In-Progress
Published: 2019-08-23 18:49:38
Updated: 2019-08-23 18:49:38
Packaged: 2019-12-12 17:17:36
Rating: K+
Chapters: 1
Words: 1,761
Publisher: www.fanfiction.net
Summary: In this AU Dungeons and Dragons world, The Party defends Hawkins from roaming demodogs in the wake of a major victory against the Mind Flayer. Along the way, they face off against one of their greatest foes! One shot challenge response from another site. Could be more.

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It was a dark time for The Party. The last battle with the mutated Demogoron ended in victory, but the cost; the horrible cost, lingered still. Their home village of Hawkins had been decimated. It was not the structures that were lost, but the people. The Mind Flayer had swooped into the village and, with brutal haste, eviscerated the town folk and absorbed the gore in the making of its minion. If that were not enough, The Party's Mage, Eleanor, lost her father in the subsequent battle.

Though the massive minion had been vanquished, it's smaller, no less deadly, brothers roamed the countryside terrorizing other villages, killing and stealing their people and taking them to The Upside Down. There was no time to rest or grieve. As the self-appointed protectors of the region of Indiana, they would not forego their duty, regardless of their losses. It was time to go hunting again.

It was early afternoon and, and after a hearty meal, The Party left Hawkins traveling the path into Wheeler Wood. As they entered the dense forest, it started to rain.

"The Deity is not offering his blessings today," said Dusty, the Party's bard. "We're having a bit of weather. Though, I prefer this mistiness to the pervasive, driving alternative."

"You speak the obvious, Dusty," Lucas, the Ranger, admonished. "I wish you would keep your mouth shut so I could concentrate on tracking the demodogs."

"He doesn't need to be quiet for you to track anything," Maxine, the Zoomer, chimed in, with a sing-song cadence. "You're just angry that you lost the bet and had to buy the mid-day meal for all of us."

Lucas grumbled as he continued to lead the Party through the Wood. They travelled single file, Lucas at the head, followed by Maxine, William, the Cleric, Dusty, Eleanor, and Mikal, the Paladin.

"It was a good meal, Lucas!" Dusty continued. "So good I should compose and ode to it, in fact."

"If you compose and another ode," Lucas retorted. "You better keep it to yourself. I'm likely to take that Lyre and break it over the next stone."

"Enough idle chatter," Mikal broken in from the rear. "Find me a Demogorgon to kill!"

Eleanor and William remained quiet on the road; William his nose in a scroll and El, her face shrouded in the hood of her cloak. No one bothered them.

A day and night passed with nary a demodog. The rain had intensified and the sodden Party were on the verge of killing each other or giving up and going home. Eleanor sat away from the campsite and the weak fire Mikal and Lucas had built. Will was behind her a few feet away, up the incline of the forest floor. He had taken to staying with her wherever she went. It had been her power which had removed the Mind Flayer from his body. That gift of freedom had compelled him to stay close in the event of another attack on his body.

El's tolerance for the bickering men, and Max, had reached its limits. They either needed to find some of the toothy creatures or return to Hawkins. She drew her hands from within her cloak and began to weave them in an intricate pattern. As she did so, flakes of blue light sprouted from the air. They soon dissipated, followed by oozing brown mud that rose from the trail and entered the space between her hands. As her hands twisted and flowed in and around each other, so did the mud. Pulling her hands wider apart, she separated the mud into two roiling balls. Suddenly the balls were ejected from her palms and colliding with the faces of both Lucas and Max.

"What in Hades?" Lucas growled, wiping the sludge from his face. "What was that for, El?"

"Yeah," Max exclaimed, removing the mud which had hit her high on the forehead and meshed with her fiery red hair. "That was uncalled for!"

Eleanor stood and approach the fire. "We must stay focused even if mission is not proceeding as we planned. I should have done this earlier, but I will now consult the void and seek out our enemy."

The Mage sat on the ground, warmed little by the paltry fire. She extracted an ornate kerchief from a waist pouch and folded it three times over before placing it over her eyes. The rest of the Party, apart from William, who stayed on the incline, sat solemnly and waited for El's pronouncement. When The Mage entered the void, all external interference had to be quelled.

Eleanor appeared in the blackness of Void. As always, there was a small covering of water on the floor that shimmered as she took her first steps. Expanding her mind, El saw something in the distance. She could not tell what it was, Demodog, Demogorgan, man, or some other creature. But her feeling of apprehension rose with unabated speed and her step faltered. She could hear running; the slapping of feet in the low water. As if a Zoomer, the figure was standing before her in an instant, sneering in disgust. It was no creature. It was a man. It was her Papa. The evil Sorcerer from whom she had escaped so long ago. His white hair was still finely formed though the age lines on his forehead and around his mouth had deepened. When he smiled his teeth were near black. She wanted to avert her gaze but she could not.

"*Time…to…come…home…Eleanor!" he cackled, running a sickeningly purple tongue over his teeth.*

Eleanor screamed as she lost her footing and fell backward into the darkness. The water gave way and it was broken glass that she feel through. She kept falling…

The scream that emitted from El's mouth was a wall of force that toppled the waiting Party members onto their backs.

"BRENNER!" escaped her lips in a wail and blood flowed from her nose in a steady stream. It was not the trickle that usually accompanied the use of her magic. "HE'S HERE!"

Will stood on the incline, looking every which way for danger as the rest of the group scrambled to their feet, drawing their weapons. Their backs to each other the Party scanned every direction. There

was no sign of the mad sorcerer.

El was shaking in fear, still trying to stem the flow of blood.

The small fire suddenly burst into flame and a pillar of violet smoke sprang from it. When the smoke cleared. Brenner, himself stood in their midst. In his hand was a leather leash that held five separate demodogs at bay.

"Surprise!" the Dark Mage bellowed as he dropped the leash. "It is time for you to finally die!"

The demodogs set on the Party with savage, deadly intent. Each of the members used the weapons they had in the fight for their lives

While the battle continued, still on the incline, and not under attack, Will pulled a dagger from his belt. He approached the fallen Eleanor with shaky hands and knelt beside her, placing the blade to her neck.

"Brenner!" He spat, nicking her neck. "Tell me what you saw; for her sake!"

Brenner's eyes grew wide as his attention was drawn from the the battle to the prone figure of his former apprentice.

"Wait!" the dark mage boomed. "Hold your hand or I will smite you where you stand!"

"I said tell me what you saw or she dies!" Will barked as spittle clung to his chin and his face contorted in rage.

"It was you, William," Brenner said, softly, opening his hands non threateningly. "You were my apprentice. You would be at the Flayer's Left Hand as I am at his right."

"Will!" Mikal yelled as he pierced the heart of demodog. "This is not your true self! Resist him!"

Will's mind was red with rage and hate and the desire for power. He could not allow Eleanor return with Brenner. If she did, his prophecy would not come true. He raised the dagger above his head intending to plunge it into her heart.

Mikal could not believe what he was seeing. His best friend was on the verge of killing the love of his life. His plea for Will to fight was reflexive, but his arms and legs were suddenly leaden and his sword dropped from his hand. What was this witchery? He blinked, trying to clear his vision, but the waters would not be removed. Was it tears or rain? Slowly, he reached for the dagger his belt. He watched as William's arm lowered in slow motion. He would not be in time.

"Get off of me, Foul Beast!" Lucas roared, raising and arm to protect his face and giving a forceful kick to belly of his demodog. The discarded beast knocked into Mikal and pushed him to the ground.

Placing two hands on his sword, Lucas twirled ready to release the blade into Will's heart.

Maxine watched as Will's arm lowered, Mikal fell to the ground, and Lucas moved throw his blade. It would not be in time. Reaching into her pocket, she crushed the glass bauble therein and immediately felt the rush of energy. In a burst of speed almost faster than eyes could see, she drew her blade and rushed past Brenner, knocking him backward. Her blade plunged into Will's heart at the exact moment her hand knocked his blade clear of El's body.

Will fell backward his astonished eyes remaining open in death.

Max had not sidelined Brenner as she thought she had. Brenner put a demodog on her as soon as El was safe. Brenner walked through the melee watching the poor bard fighting off one of his dogs with a lyre and tree branch. Crouching at Eleanor's side, he took her in his arms and hoisted her over his shoulder. In another blink of an eye, and a cloud of violet smoke, they were gone.

Notes: This fic was a challenge response for a timed, required element challenge on another site. The Challenge elements are below. I don't know much about D&D or Zoomers so I made some stuff up. I hope you enjoy.

Your TV Tropes is: Et Tu, Brute?

Your weather forecast is: 'We're having a bit of weather'

Your random word is: smite - to strike sharply or heavily; to kill or

severely injure by so striking

Your required line of dialogue is: "Tell me what you saw, for her sake!"

*Your picture prompt is: ckeditor_assets/pictures/1733/content_*